

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT OF DECLINING HABITATS

(Acre)

CODE 643

DEFINITION

Restoring and conserving rare or declining native vegetated communities and associated wildlife species.

PURPOSE

- Restore land or aquatic habitats degraded by human activity
- Provide habitat for rare and declining wildlife species by restoring and conserving native plant communities.
- Increase native plant community diversity.
- Management of unique or declining native habitats.

Note: NRCS uses the term “wildlife” to include all animals, terrestrial and aquatic.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On any landscape which once supported or currently supports the habitat to be restored or managed.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

- Methods used will be designed to protect the soil resource from erosion.
- Vegetative manipulations to restore plant and/or animal diversity can be accomplished by prescribed burning or mechanical, biological or chemical methods, or a combination of the four.

- Management measures must be provided to control invasive species and noxious weeds in order to comply with state noxious weed laws.
- To benefit insect food sources for grassland nesting birds, spraying or other control of noxious weeds will be done on a “spot” basis to protect forbs and legumes that benefit native pollinators and other wildlife.
- Management practices and activities are not to disturb cover during the primary nesting period in each state. Exceptions could be granted for periodic burning or mowing when necessary to maintain the health of the plant community. Mowing may be needed during the establishment period to control weeds.
- Rotate periodic planned management or other treatments throughout the restored/managed area.
- Where feasible prescribed burning will be utilized instead of mowing.
- Species will be adapted to soil-site conditions.
- Species will be suitable for the planned purpose.
- Seeding rates will be adequate to accomplish the planned purpose.
- Only certified, high quality, and ecologically adapted native seed and plant material will be used.
- Planting dates, and care in handling and planting of the seed or plant material will ensure that established vegetation will have an acceptable rate of survival.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

- Site preparation shall be sufficient for establishment and growth of selected species.
- Timing and use of equipment will be appropriate for the site and soil conditions.

CONSIDERATIONS

Habitat management activities should be prioritized, initiated, and orchestrated in concert with an existing state or regional conservation plan for the habitat, species and associated relationships.

Confer with other agencies and organizations to develop guidelines and specifications for conserving declining habitats.

In many cases threatened and endangered species or species of concern will benefit from conservation of declining habitats. Follow-up habitat assessments shall be performed on a regular basis.

Haying and grazing will be planned and managed as necessary to achieve and maintain the intended purpose.

All habitat manipulations will be planned and managed according to soil capabilities and recommendations for management will avoid excessive soil loss.

Plant materials centers and commercial growers should be encouraged to develop plant materials for habitat restorations.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for this practice shall be prepared for each habitat type. Specifications shall be recorded using approved specifications sheets, job sheets, narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other acceptable documentation.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The following actions shall be carried out to insure that this practice functions as intended throughout its expected life. These actions include normal repetitive activities in the application and use of the practice (operation), and repair and upkeep of the practice (maintenance).

Any use of fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals shall not compromise the intended purpose of this practice.

REFERENCES

- [Wetland, Woodland, Wildland – A Guide to the Natural Communities of Vermont.](#) Thompson, Elizabeth and Eric Sorenson. Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife and The Nature Conservancy. 2000. 456pp.